

Page Denied

DIA review completed.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
National Foreign Assessment Center

17 December 1981

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: North Korean Military Activity

1. There is now general agreement within the Intelligence Community that the preparations and activities observed since late November indicate a major military exercise has been underway and that it may come to a close in the next few days. Such exercises bring the North Korean military to a higher state of readiness and increase the possibility that under such a guise Pyongyang could launch an attack on the South.

2. DIA and CIA agree that there has been no movement of key ground force units from their rear area garrisons--probably the single most important indicator of possible hostilities. In previous exercises major rear area units have moved forward and we believe that they would be vital elements of any major attack across the DMZ. Ground force activity has been largely limited to small unit deployments in the forward area and to the posting of movement coordinators to facilitate actual or conceptual troop deployments.

3. Working from a common data base and a common set of indicators DIA and CIA analysts have nevertheless differed as to the significance of this exercise as it may relate to the possibility of hostilities. DIA has tended to view a number of the indicators--singly or in the aggregate--as suggesting a greater potential for hostilities. CIA has viewed the activity from the outset as training in the pattern of previous exercises conducted in the North. In part, this difference relates to the difficulty of integrating isolated pieces of information into a whole, particularly when our data base for training activity is limited and when no two exercises have proven to be exactly alike. At issue are these principal points:

-- DIA has stated that the exercise activity is unprecedented in scope. [redacted]

25X1

[redacted] CIA believes that the mobilization is more limited. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

-- DIA has attached special significance to the convening of a publicized Politburo meeting during the exercise, suggesting that it may have made national policy decisions related to the military activity. CIA views that meeting as a routine session similar to one held at approximately the same time last year. Pyongyang would be unlikely in any case to advertize its political decisionmaking if it intended hostilities.

25X1

SUBJECT: North Korean Military Activity

25X1

25X1

4. Given the limitations of our information on the North and many of the related ambiguities, prudence dictates a careful and searching review of each new piece of evidence. We conclude, however, that the activity we have seen to date is an exercise. It generally fits the pattern of activity we have seen in the past, and the absence of other major indicators suggests that Pyongyang is not using this training to shield the initiation of hostilities. In particular we view the fact that Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang will be in Pyongyang from 20-24 December as another indicator that Pyongyang is not prepared to launch hostilities.

25X1